

24 Lower Elmstone Drive Heritage Statement

HISTORY OF THE COTTAGE

The cottage was originally built about 300 years ago as a simple woodman's house belonging to the Westwood estate in an area affectionately known as 'The Gutter'. It is one of the oldest houses in Tilehurst and is Grade II listed due to its age and 'pleasant appearance'. The 1st dwelling consisted of only the two front rooms downstairs (currently the lounge and playroom) and two rooms upstairs (currently the spare bedroom and 3rd bedroom).

In fact the whole listing details are provided here <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101157218-24-westwood-glen-birch-copse-ward#.ZDhlXOzMkRM>) and describe the property as a "pleasant mid C18 cottage. 2 storeys, 2 bays. Red brick with some darker headers and brick block cornice to eaves. Tiled roof, hipped to right. Central door with lattice porch."

It was initially used as a place to smoke pigs – hence the large fireplace in the current lounge and other chimney on the north-east elevation. In or before Victorian times, the cottage was extended. The roof was extended to form a catslide roof to the rear creating additional ground floor accommodation and a small amount of first floor space with reduced head height under the roof. This added what is now a utility room (was the old kitchen) and hall downstairs plus the corridor upstairs.

The road the cottage currently sits next to (Lower Elmstone Drive) was created in the 1960s and was formerly a muddy brook several metres lower than its current height. Up until the road was created, the house was almost totally surrounded by hills & fields frequented only by rabbits, deer and other such animals. It was also officially situated at the end of Westwood Glen, with no link down to the roundabout at the top of Overdown Road, other than by walking. It would have been very quiet and secluded up until that time.

In the mid-1980s, a small single storey extension was added to the left of the house which was subsequently built over making it 2 storeys. At the same time the 3 dormer windows were added at the back of the house.

Back in 2016, another extension was added to the north of the site consisting of a large open plan kitchen-diner plus new master bedroom with en-suite on the 1st floor. This, too, had a catslide roof, dormer window facing the garden and was joined to the old house via a tall glass link. A separate double garage was included on the south of the property, having lost the single garage and car port to the extension.

CHARACTER OF THE COTTAGE, SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUILDING

Christmas Cottage is a pleasant mid C18 cottage, flanked by a double garage on the left and a relatively recent wood-clad two story extension on the right, linked by glass. It is two storeys with a central main entrance door behind a single storey small timber lattice porch. There is another door at the front through the new glass link.

The original cottage was double fronted with a window either side of the front door at ground level and two windows above, extended to the south-west back in the 80's with additional windows at ground and first floor level. The front of the cottage is red brick with some darker headers and a brick cornice to eaves. There is rendered plinth at ground level. The roof is clay tiled and hipped to north-east.

The newer wood-clad extension also has a plinth brick base, catslide roof to the north plus 2 matching wooden casement windows on the front elevation. It's other windows and doors are metal framed, including bi-fold doors within a small bay, dormer window on the first floor plus the link itself. Through sensitive and creative design back in 2016, we positively contributed to the cottage's history by enhancing the existing living spaces for 21st century living at the same time retaining the architectural merit and integrity of the cottage for a sustainable future.

Anecdotal evidence from neighbours and passers-by has shown that what we currently have on site is a rare glimpse to the centuries-old historical view of Tilehurst, coupled with a contemporary, modern extension that just 'fits in perfectly'.

DESCRIPTION & EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The main proposal can be summarised as simply “replacing the existing old central roof covering with handmade clay tiles due to it currently being severely deteriorated and lacking any roof membrane.”

NATURE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is intended to replace the roof tiles like-for-like with the same Brookhurst Sahta's that currently adorn the new extension and garage. Nothing else will be noticeable from any elevation other than the roof having matching tiles and finally being watertight.

Underneath the tiles, we intend to add a breathable, insulating membrane (currently there is none) to help with keeping water out and heat loss to a minimum without the use of e.g. celotex or similar. This membrane is often used in heritage buildings to eliminate the possibility of condensation as it can let vapour pass through it. At the same time, we will remove the damp rockwool sandwiched under the tiles and replace it with sheep's wool to help with dealing with moisture.

THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE HERITAGE ASSET

The house does not sit within a conservation area, nor have any TPO trees on the site. No pruning of any trees will be necessary.

The new roof to the older core of the house is the last chapter to what has been deteriorating for the last few decades. Without it, structural damage to the rafters will undoubtedly occur as we are already experiencing water ingress.

Using the same tiles as the garage and recent extension, the roof will finally be repaired and look more coherent - presenting a 'complete' house to the community, rather than something that “always looks like it needs work doing to it”.

Proposed works will not impact the integrity of the existing house, but rather allow it to survive for decades longer with minimal intervention. As one of only 3 listed buildings in a few square miles, it is imperative that we address the issues with the roof.